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HUMANITY,
OR THE
RIGHTS OF NATURE.
BY MR. PRATT.

From gayer scenes where careless Fancy strays,
Now turns the MUSE to more advent'rous lays.
Farewell, a long farewell, to founts and flow'rs,
Far loftier themes demand her thoughtful powers.

But, ah! first kneeling at Compassion's shrine,
Her opening lay, HUMANITY, be thine!
Thee she invokes, oh! soother of distress,
Who with our kindness wove our happiness;
For as thy circling virtues round us move,
From our best *deeds* thy brightest *joys* we prove;
Oft as our neighbor sinks in sudden grief,
Thou wak'st as sudden to afford relief;
Oft as the stranger's bosom heaves with sighs,
The soft responses in our bosoms rise:
The cries of terror and the throes of care,
The groan of misery, and distraction's glare,
Sickness that droops, disease that gasps for breath,
The howl of madness, and the shriek of death,
Deep sounds of agony that most affright,
Dread views of horror that most blast the sight,
Dire as they are, like wond'rous magnets draw,
And own, HUMANITY, thy sacred law.
Thus bliss is doubled, and thus pain can warm,
From thee, HUMANITY, both boast a charm;
We cheer, are cheer'd, now grant and now receive,
And take, in turn, the comfort which we give.

Thus thy fair streams spread plenty where they run,
 Yet bless the fountains whence those streams begun;
 Although a thousand channels they supply,
 Like the rich Nile their source shall never dry.

But Thou from whom these bosom'd comforts flow,
 Thou equal Friend of happiness and wo,
 Hast still ordain'd grief shall to crimes belong,
 And keen affliction wait on ev'ry wrong;
 Pride, hate, revenge, and tyranny, and strife,
 As they mix poisons in the bowl of life,
 Dash their *own* cup, and impotently try
 To break, *unpunish'd*, nature's *social tie* :
 Good is of good productive, ill, of ill,
 Conscience o'er both exerts her empire still,
 And this great truth, shall ev'ry tyrant know,
 THE WO HE GIVES, SHALL BE REPAID BY WO.

Why are sires torn from children and from wife,
 Dragg'd at the Car of Trade, and chain'd for life;
 And why do human hecatombs expire,
 Smote by her mangling whip and murderous fire?
 Those stripes, and killing shrieks that rend the air,
 Ill fated AFRICA, thy wrongs declare.

Unfeeling INT'REST ! dark, insidious power,
 Whose sanction'd arts waste nations in an hour;
 Whose mining frauds, more fatal still, destroy
 Hope's tender blossom, and the fruits of joy;
 Thou, to whom all the coward slights belong,
 Thy heart too cruel for each generous wrong.
 Theft, rapine, plunder, fraud, and murder, stand,
 Fell ministers ! to wait thy dire command.
 Yes thou, the founder of this impious trade,
 Mad'st *him* a slave, that nature never made,
 Tore the poor Indian from his native soil,
 And chain'd him down to never-ending toil.
The rights of man by nature still are due,
To men of ev'ry clime and every hue.

If giant POWER confers this wanton sway,
 Subdues the strong, and makes the weak obey,
 Does Power give RIGHT ? beware that dangerous plea,
 Perchance, such power may spread its right to thee.
 The slave once stronger than thyself, shall stand,
 And seize the sceptre of usurp'd command;
 Arm'd with thy iron scourge shall bid thee toil,
 Scar thy white skin, and chain thee to the soil :
 Thy spirit fainting in the glare of day,
 Shall bid thee naked brave the Syrian ray,
 Thy scorn retort, retaliate all thy rage,
 Wear out thy youth, and murder thee in age;
 Tear from thy fetter'd arms thy child and wife,
 And blast the budding promises of life;
 Repay, in turn, each stroke thy baseness gave,
 And make THEE feel what 'tis to be a Slave.
 Ah ! false as fatal ! to the Weak and Strong,

Th' inherent rights of nature still belong :
 No partial principles the just impel
 To thinking wisely, or to acting well ;

And liberty, of all mankind the cause,
 Becomes a forfeit *only* to the laws,
 Those sacred compacts which like links sustain,
 Connecting parts of the great social chain :
 And while, with these, no member is at strife,
 As full the right to liberty as life :
 Avaunt ! assertors of *superior* right,
 And vain distinctions betwixt *black* and *white*.
 Firm and immoveable on nature's base,
 Stands the grand charter of the human race ;
 And *He* who gave the blessing gave it free :
 Life were a curse if robb'd of Liberty !

NATURE and *HABIT*, human kind control,
 The needle one, and one th' attractive pole ;
 And what, in Europe, we a grace may call,
 Is found in Africa no grace at all ;
 And what abhorr'd deformity we name,
 In many a clime is dignified with fame.

Survey the various globe from shore to shore,
 Weigh *MANNERS*, *CUSTOMS*, and be proud no more :
 Observe how all to fix'd opinion bow,
 Or fond caprices, which no standards know ;
 Thou, who would'st fix her to thy pallid face,
 Behold her beauty shift the ever changeful grace.
 The beard must here, e'en to the girdle flow,
 There, not a bristle must presume to grow.
 The dazzling white is in this clime admir'd,
 The glossy black in that is more desir'd.

Feel humbly then, nor deem all grace thy own,
 Nor think that *Nature* charms in thee alone ;
 The poorest native of the poorest coast,
 Hath still his beauty, still his good to boast ;
 From earths beginning to its utmost ends,
 Proportion'd charm, proportion'd bliss she sends,
 Exact division, but adapted still,
 To what in different climes her children feel,
 To what, when undebauch'd by man's desires,
 Or fancied wants, necessity requires ;
 Nor sparing, nor yet prodigal her plan,
 With pois'd equality she blesses man :
 On the worst soil some heartfelt joy bestows,
 Which the glad son, she there has station'd knows,
 And what from us extorts the taunting sneer,
 May to his sense an happiness appear,
 And the fond gifts which we indulgent deem,
 To him an aggravated curse may seem.

Vain all dispute of colour, form or size,
 In pride, in pride alone the difference lies ;
 Whence, then, presumptuous man, deriv'd thy right,
 And by what law does olive yield to white ?
 Their nature, origin, and end, the same,
 Why has not brown, black, copper, equal claim ?
 Though shifting colours like their parent earth,
 Alike their species and alike their birth.

If not in *colour* then, perchance in *sense*,
 In the *soul's* power, may lie the proud pretence,

Ah, no! from Nature's hand all equal came,
 Thro' ev'ry clime an helpless babe's the same,
 The same frail emblem of our state appears,
 A weak and helpless being born in tears!
 If cultur'd climes refine on nature's plan,
 They change the mode, but never change the man.
 The human passions strongly are impress'd,
 In the untutor'd, as the polish'd breast;
 In the swarth African that's bought and sold,
 As the fair plunderer that steals his gold,
 Heav'n form'd his eyes to love his native hue,
 And pointed all his appetites as true,
 Those sable tints, at which with fear we start,
 Are the lov'd colours that attract his heart:
 Our polish'd arts, refinement may bestow,
 But oft enfeeble nature's genuine glow.

In polish'd arts unnumber'd virtues lie,
 But ah! unnumber'd vices they supply;
 Here, if they bloom with ev'ry gentler good,
 There, are they steep'd with more than savage blood;
 Here, with Refinement, if sweet Pity stands,
 There, Luxury round them musters all her bands;
 'Tis not enough that daily slaughter feeds,
 That the fish leaves its stream, the lamb its meads,
 That the reluctant ox is dragg'd along,
 And the bird ravish'd from its tender song,
 That in reward of all her music giv'n,
 The lark is murder'd as she soars to Heaven:
 'Tis not enough, our appetites require
 That on their altars hecatombs expire;
 But cruel man, with more than bestial power,
 Must heap fresh horrors on life's parting hour:
 Full many a being that bestows its breath,
 Must prove the pang that waits a *ling'ring* death,
 Here, close pent up, must gorge unwholesome food,
 There, render drop by drop the smoking blood;
 The quiv'ring flesh improves as slow it dies,
 And Lux'ry sees th' augmented whiteness rise;
 Some gash'd and mangled feel the torturer's art,
 Writhe in their wounds, tho' sav'd each vital part.
 Ask you the cause? the *food more tender grows*,
 And callous Lux'ry triumphs in the blows:
 For this, are some to raging flames consign'd
 While yet alive, to sooth our taste refin'd!

O power of mercy, that suspends the rod!
 O shame to man, impiety to God!
 Thou polish'd Christian, in the untutor'd see,
 The sacred rights of sweet HUMANITY.
 Thine is the World, thy crimson spoils enjoy,
 But let no wanton arts thy soul employ;
 Live, tho' thou do'st on blood, ah! still refrain
 To load thy victims with superfluous pain;
 Ev'n the gaunt tiger, tho' no life he saves,
 In generous *haste* devours what famine craves;
 The bestial paw may check thy human hands,
 And teach *dispatch* to what thy want demands,

Abridge thy sacrifice, and bid thy knife,
 FOR HUNGER KILL, BUT NEVER SPORT WITH LIFE.

Relief appears as the Muse shifts her place,
 To where pure manners bless the gentlest race ;
 Lo, where the BRAMINS pass their blameless life,
 Free from proud culture, free from polish'd strife,
 To man, brute, insect, nature's constant friends,
 The heart embraces and the hand extends ;
 See the meek tribe refuse the worm to kill,
 No murder feeds them, and no blood they spill ;
 But crop the living herbage as it grows,
 And quaff the living water as it flows,
 From the full herds, the milky banquet bear,
 And the kind herds repay with pastures fair ;
 From sanguine man, they drive the game away,
 From sanguine man, they save the finny prey,
 The copious grain they scatter o'er the mead,
 The bird to nourish and the beast to feed,
 The flowers their couch, their roof the arching trees,
 And peaceful nights succeed to days of ease.

O ! thou proud Christian, aid Fair Nature's grace,
 And catch compassion from the Bramin race :
 Their kind extremes, and vegetable fare,
 Their tender maxims, all that breathes to spare,
 Suit not thy cultur'd state, but *thou* shouldst know,
 Like them to save unnecessary wo ;
 Like them to give each generous feeling birth,
 And prove the *friend*, not *tyrant*, of the earth.

O sweet HUMANITY ! might pity sway,
 All, all like Bramins would thy voice obey ;
 All need, alas ! thy tender help below,
 To heighten rapture and to solace wo.
One leans on all for aid, not all on one,
 What worm so feeble as proud man alone ?
 The veriest giant, by himself is found,
 Frail as the reed that every breeze can wound,
 But even the pigmy with associates join'd,
 Strong as the oak, can brave the rudest wind ;
 The SOCIAL PASSION opens with our breath,
 Pursues thro' life, and follows us to death.

Tyrants o'er brutes with ease extend the plan,
 And rise in cruelty from beast to man :
 Their sordid policy each crime allows,
 The flesh that quivers and the blood that flows,
 The furious stripes that murder in a day,
 Or torturing arts that kill by dire delay ;
 The fainting spirit, and the bursting vein,
 All, all are reconcil'd to Christian gain.

In cold barbarian apathy behold,
 Sits the slave-agent bending o'er his gold ;
 That base contractor for the chain and rod,
 Who buys and sells the image of his God.
 Callous to ev'ry touch that Nature lends,
 The bond that ties him to his kind he rends,
 Robber at once and butcher of his slaves,
 Nor grief, nor sickness, age nor sex, he saves,

But plung'd in traffic, coldly can debate,
The parent's destiny, the infant's fate ;
The teeming mother of her hope despoil,
And poise the gains of child-birth or of toil ;
The sighs and groans which spring from both he spurns,
For life or death 'tis gold the balance turns.

O pride enormous ! impudence of man !
But let not Britons imitate the plan,
Frame no false systems and then call them wise,
Or make distinctions where no difference lies ;
Alas ! full oft the fair European face,
Masks a mind darker than the darkest race ;
The Negro's heart may be a purer shrine,
For thoughts devout, O ! haughty White, than thine,
Acceptance find more gracious from its God,
Than the proud master who uplifts the rod.

Oh ! tyrant White, forget alike thy gold,
And every virtue in thy Black behold,
All that is honor'd, lov'd, or priz'd by thee,
In thy scourg'd Negro, blushing, shalt thou see.

Thus Negro Virtues, Negro Frailties shine,
Say, paler Savage, do they yield to thine !
Their ardent virtues emulate thy own,
Their errors are the errors of their zone ;
And art thou still Supreme of human race,
Still boasts thy Nature the imperial grace ?
Ah no ! without the aid of borrow'd arts,
Worth, greatness, goodness, elevate THEIR hearts,
The tow'ring spirits in their bosoms move,
They hate with vigor, as with force they love,
Together leagu'd, till death they faithful toil,
And smooth the wrong that chains them to the soil ;
Still hand in hand their direful loads they bear,
Divide each joy and mitigate despair :
Vivid as Thine the sense of joy and pain,
Thrills in each pulse, and vibrates in each vein ;
When hope inspires, behold, as bright a ray,
Illumes their eyes and o'er their feature's play ;
When grief assails, the tears as copious flow,
To mark the soft or agonizing wo ;
When the lash scourges, or the pincers rend,
A shriek as piercing from the heart they send ;
Ere the brave spirit of the man is broke,
Ev'n with a Briton's scorn they spurn the yoke,
Love of their native Land, that magic charm !
Against a host hath made a handful arm,
They love like Thee the soil that gave them birth,*
And treasure up each particle of earth.

Yet who the Negro's *sufferings* can relate,
Or mark the varied horrors of their fate ;
Where, blushing Truth ! shall we their griefs begin,
Or how commence the catalogue of Sin ?
Demons of torture ! ye who mock at wo,
And smile to see the crimson blood-track flow,

[* America is the *native* soil of our coloured population.]

In horrid triumph rise from central Hell,
 Th' inventive pangs of Christian growth to tell,
 Oh! aid the shuddering Muse to paint the grief,
 Which calls on death for pity and relief;
 Oh! powers of Mercy, loose that massy yoke,
 Oh! hold that Arm, for murder's in the stroke!
 Behold that axe the quivering limb assails,
 Behold that body weltering in its wails!
 Ah! hear that bludgeon fall, that lash resound,
 And see those wretches writhing on the ground!
 See yonder mangled mass of Atoms lie,
 Behold that Christian's hands the flames apply,
 At the bare feet is laid that sulphurous train,
 It climbs the heart and burns into the brain!

Ye friends of Man! whose souls with mercy glow,
 Throb not your breasts with sympathising wo?
 Fires not the social blood within your veins,
 To make the White Man feel the Negro's pains?
 Beat not your hearts the miscreant arms to bind,
 Of the proud Christian with a savage mind?
 Dost thou not pant to snap the impious chain,
 And rush to succor the insulted train?
 From servile bonds, to free the hapless race,
 And fix the haughty tyrants in their place?
 Make THEM the weight of Slav'ry to know,
 Till their hard natures melt at social wo,
 Nor till they humanize to social men,
 Would ye restore them to their rights again!

Oh! FREEDOM, sacred Goddess! who inspires
 Th' untutor'd Savage with sublimest fires,
 Oft have the Chiefs o'er listed troops prevail'd,
 And Nature's warriors sped where armies fail'd;
 While the bought soldier in his trade of death,
 With sordid contracts bargains for his breath,
 While the brave Indian from his fetters broke
 Ev'n Famine braves to feel no more the yoke.

What will not FREEDOM's Heav'n-descended fire,
 In cultur'd, or untutor'd Souls inspire?

THE RIGHTS OF NATURE and of GOD to save,
 Men scoop the rock and build upon the wave.

Then blest be Penn, ay worthy to be blest,
 Friend of the Wretched, Guardian of th' oppress'd,
 Bless the good Man—ye Negroes bow the knee,
 And bless him, Thou, Oh! blest HUMANITY—
 Who, scorning interest, thus portray'd the plan,
 That gave to Men the awful rights of Man;
 "Oh! Race dishonor'd, whose sad forms we tear,
 "Nor heed our kindred, heed our Maker there,
 "Too long on sordid Altars have ye bled,
 "From Christian hearts too long has Mercy fled:
 "At length return'd, behold she brings relief,
 "From Heav'n she comes to sooth the Captive's grief;
 "My brethren, rise, the galling chains unbind,
 "And give the generous Model to Mankind;
 "What Avarice seiz'd, let Justice now restore,
 "Let Negroes serve, but serve as Slaves no more;

"Or if the NAME of Slave must yet remain,
 "Strive not for words, so we remove the pain ;
 "Strive not for words, so we the rights supply,
 "The ravish'd rights of sweet HUMANITY!"

The good Man spake, applauding thousands bow'd,
 The Hero triumph'd, and the Christian glow'd,
 Unnumber'd Hearts, by great example fir'd,
 Bent to the Law HUMANITY requir'd ;
 Unnumber'd Manacles that moment broke,
 Unnumber'd Slaves were loosen'd from the yoke,
 Unnumber'd Hands were folded up in air,
 Unnumber'd Voices breath'd a grateful prayer,
 Unnumber'd Eyes, late bath'd in tears of wo,
 Ah, blissful change ! with tears of joy o'erflow :
 From God the spark began, to Man it came,
 Till all perceiving, all partook the flame ;
 (Heav'n's fire electric,) as one touch'd the ball,
 It struck a second till it spread to all.

And lo ! methinks, on Fancy's wing convey'd,
 The Muse already gains the palmy shade,
 Herself the messenger, to Southern plains
 Ardent she flies to break the tyrant-chains.
 "I come, I come to set the Captive free,
 "Ye suffering Heirs of sweet HUMANITY.
 "Whose Minds can reason, and whose Hearts can move,
 "With all the joys and agonies of Love,
 "Sublime on Nature's scale again ye rise
 "Equals on Earth, as equals in the skies.
 "Where Freedom bids, now take your blithsome way,
 "Yours the fair morn, and yours the closing day,
 "Yours is the jocund eve, its sports command
 "Or on the cooling wave or barren sand,
 "If in your breasts the Patriot passions burn
 "To your lov'd Country, to your Homes return,
 "Free, unconfin'd, where'er your coursé ye bend,
 "Still, still shall Liberty your steps attend !"

Sudden before her sable lord appears,
 Th' enfranchis'd wife adorn'd with faithful tears,
 Mothers again their kidnapp'd babes behold,
 Sons clasp their Sires in slavery grown old :
 And still in fond delight their triumphs rise,
 And this glad Truth re-echoes to the skies,
Negroes are Men, and Men are Slaves no more,
Fair Freedom reigns, and Tyranny is o'er !

The First of August, 1833.—This is the fourth anniversary of the memorable day when "Slavery was utterly and forever abolished throughout the British colonies." The noble act, however, was trammelled with a seven years' apprenticeship, which was at once relinquished by Antigua, of course, with the happiest results. Barbadoes and Jamaica have now done likewise. This pending consummation of Sharpe, Clarkson & Co. affords a fitting occasion for the republication of an epitome of "HUMANITY," written in aid of their early efforts by Mr. Pratt. It is probably more comprehensive and complete than any single poem on the subject. The author was the intimate friend and ardent imitator of John Howard, and his travels (entitled "Gleanings") in Wales, Holland, &c. were in their day as much admired and quoted, as in ours are those of Miss Martineau. Though published half a century ago, the magnitude of the theme, the merit of the poem, and the celebrity of the writer, form a three-fold cord, not quickly broken.



